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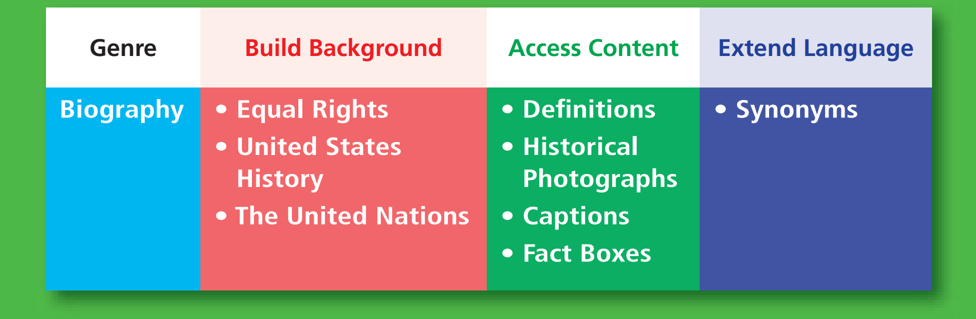
Social Studies

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Ralph Bunche
Quiet Hero

by Daniel Tracy





Genre	Build Background	Access Content	Extend Language
Biography	• Equal Rights • United States History • The United Nations	• Definitions • Historical Photographs • Captions • Fact Boxes	• Synonyms

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Ralph Bunche received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1950.



Ralph Bunche was a man dedicated to peace and justice. He was born in Detroit, Michigan, in 1903. Ralph grew up in the home of his grandmother Lucy Johnson. He called her Nana.

Nana was very important to Ralph when he was growing up. Later in his life, he wrote an article called "My Most Unforgettable Character." It was about Nana.

Nana became even more important to Ralph after his parents died when he was just thirteen. Through all the sadness, Nana made sure Ralph believed in himself and always did his best.

Nobel Peace Prize: prize awarded every year to a person who has done important work for peace





Ralph's grandmother, Lucy Johnson, whom he called Nana



Nana could see that Ralph was very smart. She pushed him to work hard. At the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) Ralph had the best grades in the school.

At UCLA, Ralph also began to take an interest in politics. He helped to bring students of different races together to talk. He believed people would get along better if they knew more about one another.

Even as a college student, Ralph was interested in making peace. He gave a speech called "That Man May Dwell in Peace." In the speech, Ralph explained that there could not be peace without justice.

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politics: the work of government

justice: fairness, rightness

After graduating from UCLA, Ralph continued his studies at Harvard University. Soon he became a professor at Howard University. His love of justice led him to work for civil rights for African Americans. Ralph also traveled to numerous countries around the world.

In 1937, Ralph traveled to South Africa to see how people lived there. South Africa had many diamond mines.

Ralph learned that the people who owned the diamond mines were exploiting the workers. The black South Africans did most of the hard, dangerous work in the mines but were paid very little. Ralph saw that many people had no justice, and he wanted to help them.



Did You Know? **Civil Rights**

Civil rights are rights that belong to all citizens and are protected by the government. Often, civil rights refer to the right to be treated equally. People of different races, genders, and religions must be treated fairly, according to laws.

professor: someone who teaches at a college or university

exploiting: taking advantage of others to get rich



For the next few years, Ralph Bunche continued to learn about Africa. He became an expert. In 1941, when World War II began, the U.S. government needed to know more about Africa. Ralph helped to collect the information.

After that, Ralph Bunche spent most of his time in public service. He worked for the government in Washington, D.C., for several years. Ralph did his job extremely well and impressed many people. Soon he was given more responsibility.





Ralph Bunche was presented the Outstanding Citizenship Award in 1949 by President Truman.

public service: doing work to help people, as a government worker









Ralph in his United Nations office

When World War II ended, people around the world realized that war had caused too much suffering and death. So in 1945, leaders from around the world formed an organization called the United Nations (UN). Ralph Bunche helped plan and organize the UN. He served as an official at the UN for many years.

Ralph Bunche had skills that were useful at the UN. He knew that people who were fighting often avoided each other. Ralph was good at getting people to talk when they did not want to talk. He helped countries to stop fighting by asking their leaders to be fair to each other.

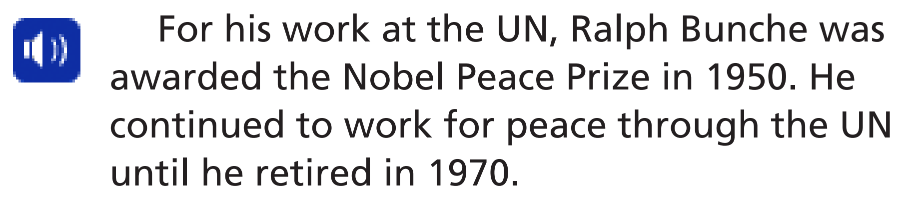


Did You Know? **United Nations**

The United Nations was established on October 24, 1945. Many countries in the world are part of the UN. The main goals of the UN are to help countries avoid wars and to support justice and rights for all people.



Ralph Bunche meeting with Israel's Prime Minister David Ben Gurion in 1949



For his work at the UN, Ralph Bunche was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1950. He continued to work for peace through the UN until he retired in 1970.

During that time, Ralph Bunche also worked for justice for African Americans in the United States. He worked with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a civil rights leader. Ralph Bunche and Dr. King believed in using non-violent methods to get justice. On August 28, 1963, Dr. King spoke to a crowd in Washington, D.C. He gave a speech that became very famous in the Civil Rights movement: "I Have a Dream." Ralph Bunche also spoke that famous day in Washington.









Ralph Bunche and Dr. King lead a march for civil rights.

Two years later, Dr. King and Ralph Bunche marched again. They marched for civil rights in Alabama. Ralph Bunche had a disease that made it very painful for him to walk, but he kept walking. At the end, he spoke to the crowd, along with Dr. King.

Dr. King and Ralph Bunche were two leaders who loved justice. They marched side by side to make the world a better place.

Did You Know? **The Civil Rights Marches**

Leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., organized peaceful marches to demand justice. Many people would gather at one place and march through the streets. They would carry signs asking for justice and for civil rights. On March 21, 1965, 3,200 people started a march in Selma, Alabama. Five days later, when they reached Montgomery, Alabama, there were 25,000 people marching.

Talk About It

1. Who was the most important person in young Ralph Bunche's life?
2. Why was the United Nations created?

Write About It

3. Ralph Bunche helped change the ways people in the world cooperate. On a separate sheet of paper, write about some of the ways he did this.

Extend Language

Justice and *fairness* are synonyms. If you treat someone with justice, you treat the person with fairness. On page 4, a synonym for *many* is *numerous.* How are their meanings similar?

Illustrations: 3 David Erickson

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